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Establishing a Women's Literacy Support Group (A Post Literacy Approach): A Manual for Facilitators

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**Establishing a Women's Literacy Support Group
(A Post Literacy Approach)**

A Manual for Facilitators

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgment	1
Introduction	2
Chapter I	
1.1 Overview	6
1.2 Why is a Self Support System Necessary?	8
Chapter II	
2.1 Overview	14
2.2 First Meeting	14
2.3 Guidelines for Further Meetings	22
a) Format	22
b) Learning Methods	27
c) Evaluation	30
Conclusion	33
Appendices	
A) Role of the Facilitator	
B) Activities for Support Skills	
Bibliography	

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INTRODUCTION

Nonformal education (NFE) and literacy have been growing concerns for the last two decades in Nepal. NFE/Literacy in Nepal is designed as a method to raise consciousness regarding development with the assumption that its implementation will further facilitate every other program whether it is related to health, agriculture, sanitation, family planning or income-generation. As a non traditional approach to teaching and learning techniques, NFE is easily promoted in any context on the development agenda. Despite its various definitions and configurations NFE/Literacy has emerged as an approach to intervention in development strategies and has heavily influenced the development plan in Nepal. NFE/Literacy in Nepal has been developed as a means to disseminate information on modern technology in agriculture, health, family planning, etc., thereby creating an extreme dependency on external knowledge, technology and materials.

Nepal has acknowledged the belief that education is a key factor for development. It was thought, for example, that if a farmer learned to read, write and compute he would be better able to produce more. It was thought that if a woman learned to read, write and compute, she would be better able to take care of her family. Therefore, NFE/Literacy strategies were

introduced using functional literacy interventions focusing on the different functions that men and women perform in the society and the family. But this strategy is obviously based on the sexual division of labor and thus supports gender bias in social and cultural norms.

Oftentimes, women are offered training in areas such as child care, nutrition, family planning and income generation. Such trainings only serve to strengthen women's roles as maintainers of the family and household and narrows their choices even more effectively. Men's opportunities to work outside the home increases and they thereby gain more access to the outside world. But women's potential and mobility is further limited and restrained.

Therefore, to help women develop a support system in the community in order to enhance their confidence and skills and enable them to join development activities which are suitable for their needs, I am proposing a Women's Literacy Support Group. A Women's Literacy Support Group consists of a small group of female literacy graduates who share similar interests, problems and socio-economic backgrounds.

Given time and support a Women's Literacy Support Group can develop as an alternative approach in the area of women and development. The group setting enables women to create a

comfortable and safer space where they can identify and discuss matters regarding their lives. Purpose of this manual, therefore, is to encourage and assist women literacy graduates in establishing their own support system for their development. Coming together to learn from each other in order to enable themselves to achieve a desired goal is the main objective of a Women's Literacy Support Group. This manual also intends to enable women to establish small and manageable literacy classes for women and girls in order to help introduce the concept of self-help in the community.

Chapter One of this manual provides a framework for a self-support system and provides a rationale for establishing a Women's Literacy Support Group in Nepal. Chapter Two specifically explains how the support group meetings can be organized and how different types of learning modes/methods can be used in order to keep the group moving in the appropriate direction.

The last section of Chapter Two proposes a format for evaluation. An ongoing evaluation is suggested in order to maintain the appropriateness of the support group meetings/activities.

This manual is an attempt to introduce a pattern for a support group. This manual endeavors to provide an alternative

approach to women's literacy programs which must do more to enable women to move further from reading, writing and computation to the utilization of those skills for individual as well as community development.

CHAPTER I

1.1 Overview

...we professionals must learn to appreciate the fortifying potential of the natural person-to-person supports in the population and to find ways of working with them through some form of partnership that fosters and strengthens nonprofessional groups and organizations (Caplan, 1974, p. 20)

Though support systems within communities have been in existence for a long time there is not a great deal of written documentation in this area. Since most support groups are helping structures outside the traditional professional service structure they have not received attention from the world of research for many years. However, in the late 1970s, researchers like Caplan and Killilea, Gartner and Riessman, and Lieberman and Borman provided a research foundation through their in-depth studies (Ross, 1984).

Researchers have identified three types of support systems. Natural support systems are those that are found among families, friends, religious groups, neighbors, etc. Professional support systems are support groups that are provided by doctors, psychiatrists, counselors, social workers, etc. Nonprofessional support groups are those that

are initiated by a group of community members themselves. These are also known as self-help groups (Ross, 1984).

The nonprofessional or self-help group is a small voluntary group which is usually formed by self-motivated people to bring about change in their lives. When people who have similar interests and have been facing similar problems or have a mutual desire to bring about change in social system or in individual lives get together and establish a support system it is considered to be a nonprofessional or self-help group. According to Katz and Bender's definition, self-help groups are:

voluntary, small group structures for mutual aid and the accomplishment of a special purpose. They are usually formed by peers who have come together for mutual assistance in satisfying a common need, overcoming a common handicap or life-disrupting problem, and bringing about desired social and/or personal change. (1976, p.9)

Self-help groups are often diverse in terms of their objectives. However, Katz and Bender discuss two specific categories of self-help groups-- those which are "inner focused" and those which are "outer focused". Inner focused groups concentrate on providing direct services and support to their members. Outer focused groups are more committed to change in the larger context such as change in social policies. (1976, p.39)

There are several instances where groups have slowly moved from being inner focused to being outer focused and vice versa. Women's consciousness-raising groups in the United States, for example, started as political and activist groups. In the second phase of the women's movement groups began to operate as non-political support groups. Later the groups again recaptured their political and activist stance (Bond and Reibstein, 1979). A support group can also carry on both categories simultaneously.

Self support groups are created around various issues. In the development field, co-operatives are often identified with self-help groups. However, self support systems which are separate from co-operatives can exist in the development arena. In other words, we can also create self support groups within development education for literacy, nonformal education, popular education, etc.

1.2 Why is a Self Support System Necessary ?

There is no doubt that literacy and NFE programs in Nepal can make a difference in women's lives. Literacy programs in Nepal are able to bring women together to discuss issues directly affecting their daily lives such as, family planning and health issues, income generation, agriculture, child care, etc. Literacy programs that work with specific groups of

women and have more explicitly defined objectives therefore are more likely to be able to help women learners establish their own support groups. If women are already exerting their own efforts to break out of the traditional role, they need a tremendous amount of support. Post literacy programs can provide that support.

It is not always possible to carry on a literacy class for a long enough time to provide continuous support for women learners. However, in countries where the general attitude towards women is not egalitarian, it takes a lot of time and effort to change attitudes and belief systems that reinforce the popular view in regard to gender discrimination. Therefore, the best strategy is to keep on trying through different methods. One such method is to help women literacy graduates establish their own support system.

While designing programs for women, we need to pay attention to a number of factors such as, women's reality and interests, women's participation in program planning, and women's knowledge. These are the major factors that any programs need to take into consideration. But oftentimes they fail to do it due to various reasons.

Women's reality and interests: Since women are responsible for the livelihood of their families, they naturally show a interest in things related to their immediate needs such as

child-rearing, family nutrition, daily household labor, etc. Such interest in immediate needs is referred to as "practical gender interests". Practical gender interests must be taken into consideration when developing long-range plans to improve women's status in society.

Another type of women's interests is referred to as "strategic gender interests". These interests refer to the need for acting on matters that make a direct impact on women's subordination. Such matters include the sexual division of labor, the burden of domestic drudgery, violence against women (rape, wife beating, sexual harassment, etc.). Strategic gender interests can only be addressed when practical gender interests have been addressed as well.

Strategic gender interests are employed to critically analyze practical gender interests by questioning 'who does what things in the family and community', as well as why and how these things affect both men and women. Strategic gender interests require questioning and acting upon the philosophy of assigning women to domestic and child care duties while entitling men to work in the public domain. To enable women to question existing gender bias in social practices they need a large amount of time as well as a safe space for discussion and action-planning.

Literacy classes in most countries usually deal only with practical gender interests. While the classes lay a foundation for graduates to begin to think about strategic gender interests, there is seldom the opportunities for further reflection and learning. A Women's Literacy Support Group provides an appropriate time and space for women to begin to discuss strategic gender interests along with other development issues.

Women's participation in program planning: Another important factor that needs attention is women's participation in program planning. Most literacy programs do not include women learners in the planning stage. However, if there are existing women's support groups in a community, literacy programs could then be organized by and through such groups. Consequently, literacy programs would be flexible in operation as well as empowering. When they have some input and have opportunity to take part in the planning and management, they have more of a sense of ownership. A sense of belonging would certainly help boost self-esteem and self-confidence as well.

Women's knowledge: The last but most significant factor that needs consideration is acknowledgment of women's existing knowledge systems. The women's literacy Support Groups should be used to restore and affirm women's knowledge- their ways of doing things, dealing with the problems, etc. rather than just

imparting new knowledge. It will be easier for women to understand and accept new knowledge if it is based upon the existing knowledge. So it is more appropriate to incorporate the new with the old. A Literacy Support Group will be a relevant place for women to analyze and blend new knowledge with the old.

Given the time and support, Women's Literacy Support Groups can develop an alternative approach to women's participation in development. The purpose of this manual therefore is to encourage and assist women literacy graduates in establishing their own support system for their own development. Coming together to learn is the main objective of a Women's Literacy Support Group. The group setting enables women to create a comfortable and safe space where they can identify and discuss matters regarding their lives. The specific purposes of having a Support Group of this type are to:

- build self-confidence and self-dignity among women;
- provide a forum to expand women's reading, writing and numeracy skills;
- provide a forum for using literacy skills in daily life;
- enable women to identify their needs and understand the effectiveness of collective efforts;
- increase women's ability to promote positive change through analyzing their roles in society.

One of the main intention of this manual is to help enable women literacy graduates to establish and maintain small and manageable literacy support groups which will further help to introduce the concept of self-support groups in communities.

CHAPTER II

2.1 Overview

It is always very helpful to have a pattern to follow at the initial stage for the support groups. Therefore an attempt has been made to provide guidelines to help a literacy facilitator initiate and organize a Women's Literacy Support Group. With the help of different learning and teaching modes a base will be provided for the creation and the sustenance of a group.

It is equally important to know how the members are faring and how they are feeling about their groups. In order to acquire this kind of information, a Women's Literacy Support Group also needs to have a regularized evaluation. So, this chapter will also provide a method for evaluation along with a pattern for meetings.

2.2 The First Meeting

The first meeting is very important. This is the time when women discuss and decide to establish a Women's Literacy Support Group in order to continue the learning they started in their literacy class. The purpose of the first meeting is:

- * to establish a connection among the women who are present;

- * to determine a focus and a format for meeting;
- * to determine a meeting time;
- * to help each woman decide whether or not to participate.

This first meeting is important because it will establish a pattern for future meetings and activities. The first meeting can be conducted in many different ways. However, it will be much easier to get the group off the ground if a certain framework is followed. The group might not be able to cover all the issues on the agenda in the first meeting. In that case, the agenda can be carried over to a second meeting.

It is appropriate that the meeting be initiated by a literacy facilitator who has brought the women together for the establishment of a Women's Literacy Support Group. The facilitator who is helping to bring the group together will perform several roles although she/he may not be active all the time. She/he is only an associate who will lead the first meeting and assist the members keeping the group going by providing necessary information and resources. *(The role of the facilitator will be discussed later in the Appendix.)*

To assist the support group, the facilitator can do two things: help the group understand how to use the Support Group Guidebook, and explain the information contained in the

Guidebook at the appropriate times. Since the facilitator cannot be present all the time it is important to help the members learn to use their Guidebook. Adequate use of Guidebook will enable newly-literate members to practice their reading and reflecting skills. Moreover, they will become familiar with the basic information needed to keep the group going. If members are acquainted with the pattern and the process beforehand they will be more concerned about what happens in the group. This will certainly help the group move more effectively. The framework that I am going to propose consists of different sessions and activities.

Time: 2 hr. 15 min.

Material: newsprint (if possible) or a bigger piece of paper, sign up sheet/register, a separate notebook (copy) for minutes, notebooks for all members and pens.

Each one will take the minutes on a rotating basis. The facilitator will help take the minutes as well.

Chinaparchi (Introduction): Since the members come from the same literacy class they might know each other. However, it is very interesting as well as stimulating to begin the first meeting by saying something about oneself.

The "Chinaparchi" is an approach to help people know each other better. Some people call it the "getting-to-know-you process". In this process everybody will take a turn and say her name, where she lives, if married whether she has children, etc. The person will also respond to questions. The facilitator can make a list of questions and post the list so that the members will be able to look at it and respond one by one. Some examples of questions are:

- a) How did you come to this meeting?
- b) Do you have any particular enterprise, business or project?
- c) What does your normal day look like?
- d) What do you expect to gain from this group?
- e) Can you tell something significant about yourself which you feel very good about?

[THE FACILITATOR CAN DEVELOP HER/HIS OWN QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO THE SITUATION AND CONTEXT OF THE GROUP.]

When the "Chinaparchi" is over the facilitator will welcome the whole group and talk briefly about the purpose and the agenda of the meeting. This is also the time to refer to the manual and explain what it proposes. In the welcome note it is important to acknowledge the presence of the members and the interest that they have shown so far.

The facilitator will then express the hope that by the end of this meeting everybody will have a clear picture of what the Literacy Support Group is and what their position or role will be if they decide to be in the group. The facilitator informs the group that three things need to be decided during this first meeting:

- 1) How often the group will meet?
- 2) Where will the group meet?
- 3) What will be the format for conducting the meetings?

At the end of this introductory note facilitator should ask members whether they feel comfortable continuing the sessions. Once these decisions have been made, it is not only facilitator's responsibility but the members' responsibility as well to help run the meetings.

Determining the Focus of the Group: The facilitator will start by discussing the commonalities that the group members already share. For example, all members graduated from the literacy class recently, all are interested in enhancing and using their literacy skills, all are concerned about their economic and social status, all come from the same socio-economic background etc. Discussion will be based on whatever is relevant for the particular group.

When these similarities are explored and everybody has acknowledged them, the facilitator will encourage the members to think of some issues, topics or needs that they would like to explore further as a Literacy Support Group. The members can do the brainstorming together. Ask one person to write down the issues, topics or questions on a bigger piece of paper, newsprint or the chalkboard so that everybody can see it. Of course, all the topics and issues that will be listed cannot be dealt with by such a small and informal group. The members will need to prioritize their needs and issues. Here is a simple way to help the group prioritize a list. Each member will choose one or two things that they would like to explore more in the group. The facilitator will put a tick by each person's choice(s). The facilitator will then identify which issues and topics have attracted more members. The members will keep discussing and choosing until the group agrees on a common focus.

This is the time when the group will once again examine whether they have enough common interest to keep them together as a support group. Then the members will discuss and decide whether they would like to focus on a particular issue or if they would like more time to consider other issues. The facilitator needs to make sure that the decision made at this time does not restrain the group from exploring some other issues in the future.

The facilitator and members will confirm whether there is sufficient common interest in one or more issue to keep the group going. The facilitator will then help the members gain a consensus regarding the focus topic. The list that has been developed in this session is not necessarily to decide the group's future actions, but rather to identify if enough commonality exists among the members to maintain a support group.

Kaha ra Kahile (where and when): It is essential for a support group to meet on a regular basis. It is also important to determine where and when to meet. A group can fall apart if it has to spend time in each meeting settling where and when to meet. It is essential to consider a time which does not conflict with other responsibilities. Most support groups meet weekly. But others might also meet bi-weekly, or even monthly.

In the case of Women's Literacy Support Group, it is advisable to meet at least once a week. Considering the workload of women it would not be possible to meet more than once a week. Meeting less frequently than once a week would not allow the cultivation of a well-functioning self-support system. So it is advisable for the group to meet once a week.

When the group decides how often it is going to meet it is essential to negotiate the meeting place. The place should be convenient and easily accessible. It should also be a place where the members feel comfortable as well as secure. This will enhance self-expression. If possible, members can meet in their own houses on a rotating basis. Or they can also meet in a community center. If needed, the facilitator can negotiate with the local authorities to allocate a place for the group to meet. Once the place is determined, negotiation begins regarding the meeting time. The members will identify at what time of the day they can meet. It is important to identify a time when members do not have any other major obligations.

Mothers should not be excluded from the group because of their children. If they do not have any other alternatives for child care, they should feel comfortable bringing their children to the meeting. But while negotiating the place for meeting, this issue needs to be brought to everyone's attention.

Kasari (how): By now the group has identified its focus and meeting time and place. In this first meeting the members also decide what format they are going to follow for their future meetings. In other words, the group decides how it will structure the meeting time to cover an agenda. In order

to best utilize the available time it is better to agree upon a certain format now and follow that during future meetings.

Since one of the purposes of Women's Literacy Support Group is to build self-confidence among women, it is suggested that each member facilitate the meeting on a rotating basis. It is less stressful to have two persons facilitating a meeting. One will lead the first half and the other one will lead the second half of the meeting. The outside facilitator can assist the members in learning how to facilitate a meeting.

2.3 Guidelines for Further Meetings:

a) FORMAT

This section will talk about a format for future meetings. Though the format seems rather structured, it is flexible enough to work with many topics. The group can give extra time to issues or activities that they feel important. Under this format the meeting is divided into three different parts.

- I. **Check In:** This session is designed especially to encourage women to speak up about their personal thoughts and concerns. The group will start with this session each time it meets. This will enable the members to think and to be prepared to say something about their feelings and concerns before they

come to the meeting. One can refer back to what was discussed in the previous meeting.

The women will sit in a circle and each woman take a turn to speak. Each member, for the first 1 to 3 minutes, says who she is and updates on how she is feeling being in this group. Questions such as, when did she feel most comfortable and best about the group and when and where did she feel that the group needed to be more sensitive; did she feel left out at any point in time during the meetings etc. will enable the women to have healthy communication among themselves. After this quick check-in, the facilitator needs to sum up important points and inform the group and then ask for recommendations on particular points if there are any. If there are no recommendations, the facilitator will suggest what needs to be done in the future to help the group run smoothly.

After this first round, each members will take another 3-4 minutes each to share a significant event that has happened to them, to their family or to a friend since the last meeting and their feelings about the event. Each member will also inform the group about any information, news, etc., that she thinks would be interesting to the group. For instance, a member might share something she heard on the radio or something she saw or heard on the way to the meeting, etc.

II. *Chalphal (Discussion/Dialogue):* [ONE PERSON WILL WRITE AN AGENDA DURING THE INITIAL DISCUSSION AND SOMEONE WILL TAKE MINUTES DURING THIS PART]

This session is more intense than the "Check in" session. Therefore this session needs comparatively more time. "Chalphal" is primarily for providing time to share, listen, discuss and to reflect on issues pertinent to women's everyday lives. The group will select an appropriate method from the Method chapter in order to carry on the discussion/activity.

The facilitator will ask the group to bring up issues related to the focus determined at the first meeting. However, someone might draw the group's attention towards her own specific problems and ask the group to discuss possible solutions. Or a member might talk about ideas which have been occupying their mind in any relevant areas. If many members come up with long lists to share then, if possible, the facilitator needs to ask the group to prioritize the agenda individually or if there are enough people she/he can break the group into smaller groups of at least three people.

III. *Decision and Action:* This session needs fifteen to twenty minutes to conduct. The members will talk about information and potential resources relevant to the concerns raised in the previous sharing time. They will make decisions in regard to

those concerns. In the meantime, the topics and issues for the next meeting will also be identified.

Once the group process/technique is determined, the members can assign responsibilities for any work that needs to be done for the next meeting. Task might include gathering information, bringing materials to read, inviting a health worker or agriculture extension worker or any other community development worker to talk about topics of concern, etc. This ensures that the decisions that have been made in the group will be carried over into action. [SOMEONE SHOULD WRITE WHO WILL DO WHAT IN THE MINUTES.]

IV. Closing: For the last five minutes each member will say something good about the person sitting next to her right. A member will say something about her neighbor on the basis of what she observed in the meeting. This enables the women to appreciate one another as well as to learn to feel good about oneself.

It is not necessary to hold to this format forever. This format is designed specifically to set a starting pattern for the Women's Literacy Support Group. It is much easier to have a set format in the initial stage. After several meetings, when the foundation of the group seems secure, the members may develop a new format for the group if they wish so. They can

do different activities such as story writing, story telling, proposal writing for their projects, negotiation with funding agencies for the group programs, etc. All of these activities will enable the women to utilize their literacy skills. In addition, literacy projects from which the members have graduated can provide back-up support for writing and reading activities.

As mentioned earlier, after getting off the ground the group can plan different activities for the meeting time. However, it is very beneficial to follow the opening and closing session of the given format. The opening and closing session will help maintain and strengthen group cohesion. Additionally, the beginning and the closing sessions can help women develop self-dignity and self-confidence.

Growth of the support groups depends on their nature. For instance, some groups will take a longer time for members to fully understand each other and to build connections between the members. In order to build group cohesion, such groups need to meet a couple of times to get acquainted with each other and to build team spirit before moving to any decisions or actions. Other groups may need very little time to build group cohesion. They can be ready to move right away after one or two meetings. It really all depend on where the members want to go from the first meeting. They might feel

that they still need to spend some more time learning about each other.

b) LEARNING METHODS

A group can use different methods to approach its task. The method depends on the nature of the task or issue. Each of the following methods can be adapted to the basic format of the Support Group meetings.

Information Sharing Method: Through this method, the members will learn about some topic through different activities such as a video presentation, a presentation and discussion about a book/document that someone has read, a guest presenting on a particular area, etc. In this method oftentimes members can share what they have learned by taking turns teaching each other. This gives a feeling that all are in the process of learning and no one is better than anyone else.

Information Exchange Method: In this method, members will talk about the issues, difficulties or dilemmas that they are facing in their work or families and ask for comments and suggestions from their peers. The issues can be related to finance, relationships with other family members, children's education/health, personal health, vegetable gardens, cattle, etc.

practicing a skill and making oneself confident in whatever she is trying to do.

Writing Workshop Method: [FOCUS ON PRODUCING MATERIALS FOR LOCAL USE] Through this method members will pursue a common goal. In doing so, members will actually use their literacy skills. It is advisable to enable the group to produce materials for local literacy classes. They can also practice their writing skills by writing letters to different community development organizations expressing their needs. They can write to literacy programs requesting reading materials such as newspapers, bulletins, magazines, etc. They can also write about themselves or their village or anything that they know about and make post literacy material for fellow learners in the community. For instance, if someone can draw pictures depicting something relevant to women's situations the group can persuade literacy programs to print the pictures as part of their literacy materials. In other words, this method includes any task that requires direct action such as project-writing, letter-writing, fund-raising, etc.

Analytical Method: In most cases analytical methods are used simultaneously with problem-solving, information-sharing or the information exchange method. However, this method can be used while discussing genuine issues regarding women's situations and role in society. Topics such as the

socialization process for boys and girls, the division of labor in the family and society, how women and men are raised, who taught them what in the family and community, whether they can raise their children somewhat differently, what they think can happen to women's lives in the future if they make changes, etc. might be analyzed. The group members can eventually discuss how they can inform men and other family members about the changes that need to happen in the domestic arena. After having this discussion the members can jointly write about the life they envision for women in the future.

c) **Evaluation**

I am going to propose an on-going formative informal evaluation because it will help keep the women enthusiastic and active. It is very important to discuss how the members are feeling about the group and what their experience being together has been. The members need to reflect periodically on their opinions and experiences being in the group. These periodic evaluations keep the group running smoothly and efficiently. The evaluation provides an opportunity to work on problems that the members are facing in terms of group activities in general. The members can raise any issues regarding the meeting format, topics of discussions, or other problems/uncomfortable situation that they are encountering in

the group. The evaluation can be conducted on two different levels-- the Individual Level and the Group Level.

The following questions will be helpful in designing an evaluation for individuals:

- Which session did you like the most? Why?
- Have your expectations been met? Are you getting enough support?
- How have you been helpful to the group?
- Is there anything that you would like to see happen in the group?
- Do you feel anything needs to be changed in terms of group activity or the technique/process?
- Can you think of anything that would make the group better?

The following set of questions will help design a group-evaluation session:

- Do you all listen to each other?
- Does everyone participate in the group activities?
- Have you carried out your activities/plans according to your focus, format and learning methods?
- Would you like to make changes in terms of meeting time, place and frequency?

- Is there any other issue that you think is important to consider, for example, attendance or the emergence of new members?

Conclusion

Through this project/manual I have tried to introduce the concept of a self-support system in development education in Nepal. This manual is a strategy for reflection and action rather than a description of an existing project.

For decades most development efforts have been initiated by outside change agents. The efforts have been targeted at accomplishing only certain type of tasks, not necessarily at transforming a society from the inside out. The notion of a self-support system for individual as well as community development is still a new idea in the context of Nepal.

I hope that this manual will provide a new direction to women's literacy programs. Since this manual aims at empowering women through the use of literacy skills it can be a basis for post literacy program development. I intend this manual to be directly useable as a post literacy program by literacy practitioners in Nepal.

Finally, this project has tried to show an alternative approach both to post literacy program developers and to learners to expand and utilize newly acquired literacy skills.

telling exercise will also help to learn to listen and to communicate.

Procedure:

- 1) The members will divide into small groups of at least 3
- 2) Each person will take approximately 10 min.
- 3) One member will tell the group about herself.
- 4) Other members will listen carefully and note down 5 words that they think significant in the story in a piece of paper under each person's name.

After completing this listening and communicating process, the groups will come together in a bigger group. One member will volunteer to write the words on a bigger piece of paper. Every group will say what it wrote and about whom. The word that has already been listed will not be repeated. Instead, a tick will be put to show which words get used more than once.

The words from the list will be used to identify the commonalities and differences among the members. The members will then pick out three words from the list that were given more frequently. Everybody will write one sentence using each of these words. The facilitator will collect the sentences and pose why, how, when, etc. questions on the basis of the information provided by the members. For instance, "marriage" might be one of the words that came up most frequently. Each member will write a sentence on "marriage". The facilitator can ask, for example, "Why is marriage important to them?"

What is the right time for marriage? When and why do they want to marry off their daughters?", etc. The questions depend on how the members respond to the words. The facilitator makes sure that everybody participates in the group discussion.

III. Story writing is another simple exercise which will enable women to understand the effectiveness of collective efforts. This exercise can be built upon the words that were identified in the story telling exercise. At the end of the exercise, if the group realizes that they need more time, they can always meet again or utilize the next meeting time to complete this exercise.

Procedure

The group will be divided into small groups of three. The facilitator will write the name of the group on a bigger piece of paper so that everybody can see them. Underneath the name the facilitator will list the topics that each group is going to write about.

The members themselves will decide on the topics. The facilitator will help the groups get started. For example, Group A will write about their home, or themselves or even about their village/community. Similarly, Group B could write about their children, or about their work and or even about their husbands' work.

The group members will take turns writing. For instance, one person will write a sentence or a paragraph and then pass the paper to another member. However, all will contribute equally to the story. The group will collectively phrase the information.

After they finish writing their stories the members will move into one big group. They will read aloud one another's stories. The members will discuss and analyze one another's stories. The stories can be used as post-literacy materials. They can also be used as a resource for further discussions.

In this particular exercise it is important to talk about the problems that the women faced and also the strengths and weaknesses that were observed during the group work. They need to consider, for instance, who made the decision and how, who talked more and who did not. If all group members did not equally participate, what might be the reasons? This type of discussion makes the members aware of the fact that everybody's voice and effort is equally important to accomplish a task.

IV. Interview is another exercise that the group can use. This exercise will enable women to ask questions and collect information. This will also provide the opportunity to think about how women are trained to perform different activities in the family and society. The members can interview their peers

and older women from their families and village about the socialization systems in their families. In other words, they will ask who taught what and how the teaching was reinforced in the families and the community, etc. Some questions that the members can use in their interviews are given below. However, if they feel like adding other questions, they can do so.

- Which child are you?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- How did your parents and other family members feel when your sister was born?
- How did your parents and other family members feel when your brother was born?
- How old were you when you started helping with household work?
- What did you start with? (e.g. looking after the younger siblings, cooking, fetching water, collecting fodder, etc.)
- Who taught to do what in the family?
- What did your mother and father teach you?
- did anyone ever teach you to read and write? If yes who did and why ?
- What did your brothers do at home? (specify the work, and the reason)
- Did your brothers go to school?
- Did you ever want to learn read and write?

village girl carrying a heavy load of fire wood, a man beating a woman, women carrying water, etc. are more relevant.

Everybody will pick a picture. Each person will study the picture that was picked up and think for a while. Each person will imagine a story to accompany the image. Following questions will be helpful in building a story:

- What do you see in the picture?
- Give a name to a person in the picture.
- Where is this person from?
- What do you think she/he does?
- What do you think is happening in the picture?
- Do you see any problem in the picture? If yes, why?
- Do you see any similarities with your life?
- Do you think the person is happy? Why do you think that she/he is happy?
- Do you think the person is unhappy? Why do you think that she/he is unhappy ?

When the women finish picturing the story or the situation behind the given image they will take turns presenting their stories to the group. The facilitator will encourage the members to relate the pictures to their situations. They will discuss the issues/problems that were raised.

This Photo Language exercise will help raise critical consciousness among women on the situation or issues around them. This exercise will inspire the group to see, think and address the problems.

These are some of the questions that the women can ask other women. Each member of the group can interview one woman. They can practice by interviewing each other. Then they can interview other women in the village. After the interviews, members will bring the information to the meeting and discuss the situation of women in their community. They can summarize what they learned by discussing among themselves. For example, they can probe into certain situations/issues by posing questions such as, Why did it happen? Who is responsible for this particular situation and why? How can such situations be avoided in the future?, etc.

This will provide an opportunity to understand how the upbringing of a person shapes her or his life. This thinking and analyzing process might help them discuss alternative ways of training their own children.

VI. Photo Language is a simple and interesting exercise. This exercise enables the women to think about a situation and reflect on it. This exercise will also help women generate discussion regarding ways of dealing with different situations and problems.

The members and the facilitator will bring pictures and photos to the meeting. The pictures can be cuttings from magazines, newspapers or from any other sources. The pictures should be familiar to the group members. For instance, a picture with a

APPENDIX B

Role of the Facilitator

This section will talk about the role of an outside facilitator. In this case the outside facilitator is the literacy facilitator. The facilitator will play several roles getting the group started and enabling it to keep moving. The facilitator is the one who reads this manual thoroughly and explains it to the group.

The facilitator will help the women graduates form a Literacy Support Group. She/he will talk about the support group at the end of the literacy class. If needed she/he will meet again with the women to let them know more about organization of the support group. The facilitator will then call the first meeting of the Support Group. She/he will follow the process which is explained in this manual in chapter II, "The First Meeting". If all the issues can not be dealt with in the first meeting, they can always be continued in the second meeting. The facilitator will teach the members how to take minutes in the meetings. The most important thing is that the facilitator needs to be convinced that the group can take off.

The facilitator will join the meeting once a month and check on how the group is doing. The facilitator is the person that the group consults regarding any problems or advice which is needed. The facilitator will also play the role of a resource person. She/he is the one who will help the group get

connected with other institutions or organizations. She/he will introduce the group to different options that they can pursue in terms of projects such as community literacy classes for women, reading rooms, income generation projects, child care, etc. For instance the facilitator can enable the group to put their ideas about projects/programs together in a written form following the same pattern that they used to write stories.

Additionally, the facilitator will provide and teach the group different games and exercises such as, problem solving, problem posing, critical thinking, etc., that are used in literacy classes in order to reinforce group dynamics and awareness of systemic issues.

If the facilitator feels that the group needs to be structured in order to make the members feel responsible for the group, she/he can develop a membership form. The members who decide to continue will sign the form and return it to the facilitator. The facilitator will use her/his own discretion to design the form.

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